

## Sharing the Hope of Jesus



**David Wolfe was rapidly running out of options.** From the age of 15, he bounced in and out of jail. By the time he was 40, he had given up any hope of breaking the decades-long cycle of incarceration.

David was desperate to make a change in his life. But with eight kids to care for — and the pressing need for quick cash to feed his family — his “best” source of income was selling drugs and cigarettes on neighborhood street corners.

The opportunity for change came in an unexpected way: when court-ordered community service placed him at New St. Jude Church of God in Christ, near Chicago’s Oak Park neighborhood. There he found options ... if he was willing to take them.

As he watched the people of New St. Jude, David discovered there was a different way to live. The church helped him find a job, and he began to provide for his family — legally.

At the invitation of the church, David brought his children to a Cru® Inner City PowerPack® outreach. PowerPacks® are brightly colored backpacks loaded with school supplies and gospel literature ...

The message of God’s love resonated with David and several of his older children — and they accepted Christ as their Savior!



provided for inner-city children just in time for back-to-school.

“New St. Jude had been partnering with Cru on a variety of outreaches for at least a decade,” said

Shantellas Veal, a volunteer with the church. Shantellas said the giveaways are important because they open a pathway to share God’s Word. “People pay attention more,” Shantellas said. “They’re more eager

and open to listen when their needs are also being met.”

The Wolfe family was listening and fully engaged in the PowerPack event. “The children were so happy

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because we were playing games with them about the Bible,” Shantellas said. The gift of the PowerPacks was like icing on the cake!

Along with the games, church volunteers addressed the spiritual needs of their guests by sharing the gospel during one-on-one breakout sessions. The message of God’s love resonated with David and several of his older children — and they all accepted Christ as their Savior.

Not long after the outreach, David found a home for his family and moved them to another area of Illinois, but not before stopping by New St. Jude one last time.



“He just came in and thanked us, saying if it wasn’t for us, he never would have turned his life around,” Shantellas said. “He would probably still be on the street selling drugs.”

This is the beautiful life change you help make possible through your compassionate support of Cru serving the inner city, sharing the hope of Jesus. We’re so grateful for your partnership!

## Life-Changing Connections

### ***Backpacks and Prayer!***



**Every year, PassionLife Church in Atlanta hosts its “Back to School Bash” in a park central to the McDonough Housing Authority and the surrounding neighborhood.** Hundreds of people gather for free food and fun, including a delicious barbecue meal, games, a time of worship and prayer together and, of course, the main attraction ...

**PowerPacks® provided by the inner-city ministry of Cru®** — brand-new backpacks filled with essential school supplies, a colorful bead bracelet that symbolizes the gospel story, and literature about Jesus.

But COVID-19 forced the congregation to reinvent the annual bash. The end result was “Backpack and Prayer” — a door-to-door, mask-on outreach that allowed volunteers to get more heart-to-heart time with their neighbors.



“Going door to door, we passed out the PowerPacks, checked on families, and prayed for each household individually,” said Joy Bryans of PassionLife.

“There were so many families grateful to see us and to receive prayer and school supplies,” Joy said. “We were able to reconnect with some families from last year and got to meet new ones. This was a great way to start a relationship with new families.”

One woman, living with her four great-grandchildren, was especially welcoming.

“All four children gathered and listened to the story of the gospel bracelet,” Joy said. “Jesus’s presence was powerful in that moment, and it was clear that His Word was being planted into young souls. We prayed for the family before we left. It was a really special moment of connection!”





# Jesus: A Forever Friend!

**Melanie Lamar's excitement was short-lived.** Months since going M.I.A., a set of 7-year-old twins she mentored through the S.A.Y. Yes!® after-school program at Payne Free Church in inner-city Minneapolis had suddenly returned!

The young sisters, Tali and Tamara, attended the after-school program consistently before they disappeared. They eagerly engaged in the lessons and seemed interested in learning about Jesus.

But when the twins returned, Tali and Tamara were not easily impressed. "This is weird," Tamara declared during a lesson. "I don't want to do this. I don't want to talk about God."

*Melanie was heartsick.*

Every week, she struggled to engage the twins. In the meantime, she worked on relationship building by sharing her own life stories, including how silly she felt when she slipped on the ice and struggled to regain her balance while carrying a coffee. Somehow, she managed to avoid a fall.

While the other children laughed, Tamara looked deep in thought. "Maybe God heard that you didn't want to fall, and He helped you," she shared. "Maybe He made sure you didn't fall."



Melanie was stunned. From that day on, little by little, the sisters began engaging in conversations about God, and Melanie began seeing His hand in their lives. Even Tali, who was typically quiet and shy, asked Melanie to pray with her that Jesus would be her friend forever.

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"I'm amazed by what God is doing in their lives. It's just so exciting to be part of," Melanie said.

God is reaching children with His love through our S.A.Y. Yes! Centers for Youth Development® in more than 45 inner cities across America, as we partner with urban churches to provide tutoring, mentoring, meals, and other services to at-risk children. Thank you for making it possible for kids like Tali and Tamara!

# Aiming for the Heart, Not the Trigger



Milton Massie  
Executive Director/  
Steward

**“Sticks and stones may break my bones. But words shall never hurt me.”**

Sound familiar? It should, since variations of this childhood rhyme, most often used as a defense against bullying, have been circulating since the 1800s. But words not only matter, they can also hold sway over action.

In last quarter’s National Report, I touched on the topic of language, using A.W. Tozer’s remarkable quote, “When the justice of God confronts moral inequity, which is iniquity, then judgment falls. When justice sees iniquity, judgment falls.”

We explored the danger of labels, pigeonholing one another, and how they inhibit fruitful discussions about justice and Christ’s example of just living.

I’d like to park with Tozer’s quote one more time to look at it from another angle. His comment was included in an October 1958 sermon, delivered during the early years of the civil rights movement. Dwell on that a moment. Tozer used his pulpit to compel his congregation to address inequity and justice.

When he made that statement over 60 years ago, no one would have ever called those words out of place. No one would accuse him of being a radical activist. In fact, even today, we praise Tozer as one of the most prolific and prophetic preachers in all of Christendom.

Sadly, in our current climate, I believe Tozer would be vilified for using so-called “trigger” terminology. It is true that we must be guarded in our words. As Proverbs 18:21 tells us, we should speak life, not death.

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits” (ESV).

But as Christ-followers, we are also called to speak truth and to stand for justice (see Isaiah 1:17, Proverbs 31:9, Zechariah 7:9-10, to name a few). That means tackling difficult conversations, even when the words may trigger a visceral response. I find it interesting, for example, that the same concern for compromising God’s Word when it comes to topics of justice or inequity doesn’t translate to other church teachings, such as love.

Let’s face it, the world has completely redefined the word “love.” Culture has come to embrace ever-widening definitions of love, many of them in direct opposition to Scripture, and yet, the church doesn’t shy away from still teaching about the importance of love. Could it be we are cherry-picking acceptable topics? Why is it OK to still talk about loving your neighbor, but the issue of justice is taboo?

Hear my heart. My questions are designed to invite contemplation, not criticism. Each of us — pastors, ministry leaders, and laity — should regularly assess our hearts and motives against the gospel. **Are we living out our faith in a manner that honors the imago Dei of others?**

Anything short of that is short of the full gospel.

Grateful for your partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Milton Lee Massie".

Milton Massie

Executive Director/Steward



# Meet Melanie

## *Serving the Lord in Inner-City Minneapolis*

**Melanie was struggling with God's direction for her life when she discovered Cru® Campus at the University of New Hampshire.** She shared the group's bold passion for Jesus Christ and immediately enrolled in Summer Missions, an annual program offering college students evangelism and discipleship training in practical settings.

By the time she graduated college, Melanie knew she wanted to be involved with ministry in some way ... but she was wrestling with how to combine her heart for children, refugees, and people experiencing homelessness. "I was struggling because there was no ministry that did all of it," she said.

Until she heard about Cru serving the inner city. It was an "ah-ha" moment! Melanie met with the co-leaders of Minneapolis Inner City and, after hearing their vision, she joined the team in the fall of 2020.



Melanie works with the S.A.Y. Yes!® after-school program mentoring at-risk children.

Today, Melanie works with the S.A.Y. Yes!® after-school program mentoring at-risk children. She's also been involved with several refugee families, helping them assimilate into American culture through practical means, such as shopping and teaching them to drive.

It's in those simple moments of ministry, ushered in by her Summer Missions training, that Melanie said she finds the most joy.

"It's really prepared me to engage with others and broken my heart for those that don't know the Lord," she said. "I feel like God has been so good to confirm this is exactly where I should be."

## Four Easy Steps

### *Make an ongoing impact*

**You can care for your spouse and children even beyond your lifetime — and make an ongoing impact for the gospel — by establishing a charitable gift annuity, or CGA.**

A CGA enables you to make a substantial investment in the unique ministry of Cru® Inner City while at the same time supplementing your retirement income.

- 1 Simply transfer cash or appreciated assets — stock, real estate, or precious metals — to The Cru Foundation, the estate-planning arm of Cru.
- 2 Sign a contract in which the Foundation guarantees an annual income payment for life for you and, after your death, a surviving beneficiary. *In more than 60 years of ministry, The Cru Foundation has never missed an annuity payment.*



- 3 Your CGA provides reliable **income** for life for both you and your surviving spouse or beneficiary. And it provides **savings**: You'll receive an income tax deduction for your contribution; then a portion of your income will be received free of income tax.
- 4 When you and your beneficiary have both passed away, the money is then transferred to Cru for the benefit of its inner-city ministry.

**To find out more about charitable gift annuities, please consult your financial adviser or contact Scott Mesker, Director of Development, via [scott.mesker@cru.org](mailto:scott.mesker@cru.org) or (501) 350-0121.**



# A Backpack Full of ... HOPE



**It was time for Advocate Church's annual PowerPack® distribution.** As one of our inner-city partners, Advocate Church had received brightly colored backpacks filled with school supplies — including paper, ink, markers, crayons, and gospel literature — to bless Chicago's struggling families.

At the outreach, church members met Mary — a single mother feeling abandoned by God. Her life was difficult ... she had fled an abusive situation with her little ones but couldn't find employment because of a past criminal record. To put food on the table and pay for rent, she took a job at a strip club. Mary was filled with hopelessness and shame.

But God connected Mary with Advocate Church through a back-to-school PowerPacks® outreach!

The congregation rallied around this hurting mother and her children. The pastor helped Mary find employment ... and restore her dignity.

Mary has continued to connect with her new church family. She's joined a Bible study and is growing stronger in her relationship with Jesus Christ.



Today, you can offer PowerPacks — and HOPE — to children and families of the inner city. **And any gift given by midnight August 31st can be matched dollar-for-dollar, its impact DOUBLED,** up to the \$50,000 total of our

*Compassion Doubled Matching Challenge.* Please be as generous as possible!

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